



Department of Music
University of Alberta

HELMUT BRAUSS, pianist

**Sunday, February 9, 1992
at 8:00 pm**

**Convocation Hall
Arts Building**

Program



Department of Music
University of Alberta

PROGRAM

Prelude and Fugue in C Sharp Major
(Well Tempered Clavier I)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Variations in F Minor

Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Sonata in C Major, Op. 53
(Waldsteinsonata)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Allegro con brio
Adagio
Allegretto - Prestissimo

INTERMISSION

Four Selected Preludes (Vol. 2)

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Brouillards
Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses
La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune
General Lavine - eccentric

Funérailles
Au bord d'une source
Paganini Etüde No. 6 in A Minor

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

PROGRAM NOTES

J.S.Bach's collection of 48 Preludes and Fugues in two volumes titled "Das Wohltemperierte Klavier" contains an unfathomable wealth of musical ideas and forms. This is evident in the Preludes as well as in the Fugues, the number of voices of which range from two to five. Bach must have been intrigued by the establishment of the **Welltempered Tuning System** by Werckmeister since he followed his first collection of 1722 with another in 1744 - both covering all the major and minor keys. The "brilliant" key of C-sharp major containing seven sharps inspired Bach to conceive a Prelude with extraordinary figurative brilliance and a 3-part Fugue based on a joyful, lively theme - all in all totally commensurate with the character of this particular key considered rather remote at Bach's time.

In Elssler's copy of the F-minor Variations Haydn had added the title "Un piccolo Divertimento". One may speculate that he was thus indicating that this piece does not really follow the conventional Variation Form of the time. It is based on two contrasting themes, one in the minor, the other in the major mode that are subsequently varied twice and followed by a rather extensive Coda. The constant change of minor and major certainly adds to the charm of the brilliant figuration permeating this musical gem.

Dedicated to his benefactor Count Waldstein who supported Beethoven's travel from Bonn to Vienna this "sister sonata" of the famous Appassionata shows similar musical dimensions, although leaning more towards crystalline brilliancy and apollonian clarity contrasting the powerful emotionalism and dionysian expansiveness of the Appassionata. This sonata can be considered a piece consisting of two movements of major proportions linked by an introspective "Introduzione" in the subdominant key. This rather mystic section descend into the darker regions of personal experience from which it emerges slowly towards an evocative question on the dominant G leading to the magic first appearance of the cantabile theme of the final Rondo. The architectural proportions of this final movement are concise and clear inspite of its vast dimensions. In the Prestissimo Finale Beethoven seems to revel in the display of powerful virtuosic writing including octave glissandi that are nearly impossible to perform on the heavier action of our modern grand pianos. His sophisticated pedal markings must have impressed his contemporaries and have lost nothing of their intrinsic magic even today. The triumphant ending owes much to Beethoven's generous pedal indications thereby confirming the composer's constantly evolving technical means of expression as serving his ever changing artistic visions. In this sense every Sonata of Beethoven appears as a unique musical organism rather than representing a clearly defined "species".

Program Notes (continued)

The two volumes of Debussy's Preludes can be considered a compendium of his "impressionistic language", complemented only later by his final work for piano, the sophisticated Etudes.

It is of importance that Debussy placed the socalled titles in quasi parentheses at the end of each piece thus indicating rather vague associations than definite pictures. However, these titles are important in that they stimulate the imagination of the performer thus enhancing his understanding of the pieces. (*....Brouillards*) is characterized by a static tranquility of intermixing sound patterns only occasionally interrupted only by sudden dynamic outbursts evoking the image of objects appearing and disappearing within the mist. (*....Les Fees sont d'équises danseuses*) flows with airy lightness in fast pulsation, interrupted by seemingly erratic, equilibristic changes of figurations that easily can be associated with the realm of fairy tales. (*...La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*) was supposedly inspired by the vision of a moonlight night in India permeated by oppressive sultry heat. Notable are a number of parallel chord sequences so characteristic in Debussy's treatment of the tonal spectrum. (*....General Lavine - eccentric*) is inspired by a real person, a clownish American tramp performing at that time in one of the numerous Vaudeville shows in Paris seen by Debussy and strikingly depicted in the style of an American Cake Walk.

Liszt reportedly wrote *Funérailles* under the impression of Chopin's death (October 17, 1849) noting the date October 18, 1849 as composition date. All the feelings of desperation, anguish, sorrow and resignation man is capable of experiencing are poured by Liszt into this music. In Chopin's own Funeral March in his Sonata op.35 mourning is elevated towards a noble objectivity, while Liszt's "*Totenklage*" is somewhat raw, archaic and by comparison not so refined. However, that type of directness is very powerful and can overwhelm even the sophisticated listener. Liszt preceeded the piece *Au bord d'une source* with a quotation by Schiller: "In säuselnder Kühle beginnen die Spiele der jungen Natur." Always sensitive to stimulation by poetry Liszt uses his idiosyncratic metamorphosis technique to create a delicate pastoral sound picture commensurate with the association evoked by the above mentioned quotation. The *Sixth Paganini Etude* consists of Variations on the famous theme by Paganini which has been used by many other composers including Brahms and Rachmaninoff. The simplicity of the harmonic scheme allows for endless possibilities in figurative elaboration. Paraphrased the Paganini of the Piano Liszt does not hesitate to take advantage of this reputation and collates a variety of variations combining a unifying harmonic scheme with boldly virtuosic, strongly contrasting figuration and sound patterns. A typical final virtuoso variation reflects the legendary pianistic prowess of Liszt.